

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) was prepared in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA), as amended, and the regulations issued pursuant to the Act. The EIS was prepared by the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), Washington, DC and the U.S. Army Garrison (USAG), Fort Detrick, Maryland, with technical assistance from BSA Environmental Services, Inc.

The EIS characterizes the probable and possible environmental impacts that might result from implementation of the Proposed Action and the No Action Alternative. The Proposed Action and subject of this EIS is the Construction and Operation of the National Biodefense Analysis and Countermeasures Center (NBACC) Facility by DHS at Fort Detrick, Maryland on a Site Adjacent to Existing U.S. Army Medical Research Institute of Infectious Diseases (USAMRIID) Facilities (Alternative I, the preferred alternative). The proposed NBACC Facility will be comprised of laboratories that will enable the DHS to safely study disease-causing microbes.

Two reasonable alternatives have been identified and were evaluated in this EIS. These include: Construction and Operation of the NBACC Facility by DHS at Fort Detrick, Maryland on a Site Adjacent to Existing USAMRIID Facilities (Alternative I, the preferred alternative), and the No Action Alternative (Alternative II). Environmental impacts of these alternatives were evaluated in detail and found to be negligible to minor, and mitigable.

As discussed below, Alternative I is the preferred alternative. Under Alternative II, the No Action Alternative, the proposed NBACC Facility would not be constructed and operated. This would eliminate the negligible to minor environmental impacts associated with Alternative I, but it would not address the needs of DHS for the NBACC Facility.

Three additional alternatives for construction and operation of the NBACC Facility by DHS were considered but rejected as unreasonable. Construction and Operation of the NBACC Facility by DHS at Another Location within Area A of Fort Detrick (Alternative III) was rejected for a number of reasons. The location of the NBACC Facility under this alternative would be further away from USAMRIID facilities and, therefore, less favorable for collaboration by personnel from both agencies. Furthermore, location of the NBACC Facility in another portion of Area A is not consistent with Installation land use planning and would be more distant from existing infrastructural support. An alternative location outside of the area Adjacent to Existing USAMRIID Facilities has not been identified. Although Construction and Operation of the NBACC Facility within Area B of Fort Detrick (Alternative IV) or Outside Fort Detrick (Alternative V) would fulfill the needs of DHS for the NBACC Facility, these alternatives were not evaluated in detail for several reasons. Alternative IV would require costly development of infrastructure (utilities and roadways), many of which already exist on Area A of Fort Detrick. Alternative V would be contrary to congressional intent for the new DHS laboratory to be built on Fort Detrick, and it may require costly land acquisition and infrastructural development that could delay completion of the proposed NBACC Facility by several years. In addition, Alternative IV and Alternative V would be less favorable for collaboration by research personnel from DHS and USAMRIID.

No significant adverse environmental impacts are anticipated for implementation of the Proposed Action. During the construction phase, negligible to minor impacts are expected for land use (land disturbance and other construction damage), noise, and transportation

(increased traffic and parking demand), geology (potential sinkhole formation), plant and animal ecology, air quality (fugitive dust and vehicular emissions), odors, energy resources, pollution prevention/ waste management, and occupational health and safety (work-related injuries). Mitigation for the potential adverse impacts will include compliance with regulatory requirements (forestation requirements and OSHA regulations) and adherence to BMPs and DHS contract requirements. Minor positive impacts on the socioeconomic environment are anticipated (local economy).

During the operational phase, significant positive impacts to public health and safety are anticipated from NBACC accomplishing its mission and minor positive impacts are anticipated for the socioeconomic environment (local economy). Minor adverse impacts are expected for transportation (traffic and parking demand), and negligible to minor impacts are expected for geology (potential pathways for groundwater contamination), water resources (groundwater recharge, stormwater management, sedimentation in surface waters, and drinking water supply), plant and animal ecology (displacement of deer and/or bird species), air quality (increased pollutant emissions), odors, energy resources (increased consumption), and pollution prevention/waste management.

In addition, possible adverse health and safety impacts on laboratory workers in the proposed NBACC Facility and on nearby residents during the operational phase of the project were identified and evaluated. The risks were deemed to be negligible, and mitigable through adherence to *Biosafety in Microbiological and Biomedical Laboratories* (BMBL) and other standards for safe operational practices.

The principal conclusions of this EIS are: (1) Implementation of the Proposed Action (Alternative I, Construction and Operation of the NBACC Facility by DHS at Fort Detrick, Maryland, on a Site Adjacent to Existing USAMRIID Facilities) will result in no significant adverse environmental, socioeconomic, or human health impacts related to the construction phase or the operational phase of the project. (2) Implementation of the Proposed Action will be a crucial step in addressing a national shortage of such facilities. (3) Implementation of Alternative II (No Action) would eliminate the negligible to minor environmental impacts associated with the Proposed Action, but it would not address the needs of DHS for the NBACC Facility.